

CLAIMS

1. A conditional access system comprising:  
means for generating a plurality of messages;  
means for receiving the messages; and  
5 a communications server connected directly to said generating means, said  
generating means being adapted to communicate with said receiving means via said  
communications server;  
wherein said generating means is adapted to generate messages in response to  
data communicated to the generating means from said receiving means via said  
10 communications server.
2. A conditional access system according to Claim 1, wherein the messages  
generated by the generating means are entitlement messages.
3. A conditional access system according to Claim 1 or 2, further comprising a  
satellite transponder, said generating means being arranged to transmit a message as  
15 a packet of digital data to said receiving means either via said communications server  
or via said satellite transponder.
4. A conditional access system according to any preceding claim, wherein said  
receiving means is connectable to said communications server via a modem and  
telephone link.
- 20 5. A conditional access system according to any preceding claim, wherein the  
messages are generated by the generating means in response to a command from the  
receiving means.
6. A broadcast and reception system including a conditional access system  
according to any preceding claim.
- 25 7. A broadcast and reception system according to Claim 6, wherein said

communications server is capable of effecting a dedicated connection between the receiving means and the generating means.

8. A broadcast and reception system according to Claim 6, further comprising a modem, said generating means being connected to said modem via said communications server.

9. A broadcast and reception system according to any of Claims 6 to 8, wherein said receiving means comprises means for reading a smartcard insertable therein by an end user, the smartcard having stored therein data to initiate automatically the transmission of a message from said receiving means to said generating means upon insertion of the smartcard by the end user.

10. A broadcast and reception system according to any of Claims 6 to 9, further comprising a voice link to enable the end user of the broadcast and reception system to communicate with the generating means.

11. A broadcast and reception system according to any of Claims 6 to 10, wherein said receiving means comprises a receiver/decoder comprising means for receiving a compressed MPEG-type signal, means for decoding the received signal to provide a television signal and means for supplying the television signal to a television.

12. A conditional access system for affording conditional access to subscribers, comprising:

a subscriber management system;  
a subscriber authorization system coupled to the subscriber management system; and

a communications server, said server being connected directly to the subscriber authorization system, that is, not via the subscriber management system;

wherein said subscriber authorization system is adapted to generate messages in response to data received via said communications server.

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13. A conditional access system according to Claim 12, further comprising a receiver/decoder for the subscriber, the receiver/decoder being connectable to said communications server, and hence to said subscriber authorization system, via a modem and a telephone link.

5 14. A conditional access system according to Claim 13, further comprising a satellite transponder, said subscriber authorization system being arranged to transmit a message as a packet of digital data to said receiver/decoder either via said communications server or via said satellite transponder.

10 15. A conditional access system according to Claim 13 or 14, wherein said receiver/decoder is connectable to said communications server via a modem and telephone link.

16. A conditional access system according to any of Claims 13 to 15, wherein the messages are generated by the subscriber authorization system in response to a command from the receiver/decoder.

15 17. A conditional access system according to any of Claims 12 to 16, wherein the messages generated by the subscriber authorization system are entitlement messages.

18. A conditional access system comprising:  
a communications server connectable to a subscriber's receiver/decoder;  
a subscriber management system for storing subscription information; and  
20 a subscriber authorization system for generating messages in response to commands received via the communications server, and comprising:  
an order centralized server connected to the communications server for receiving commands from the receiver/decoder and information from the subscriber management system;  
25 an authorization server connected to the order centralized server for identifying and validating a subscriber in response to an authorization request from the order centralized server; and

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a message generator connected to the order centralized server for generating entitlement messages in response to a command received from the order centralized server;

5 said order centralized server being adapted to issue said command to the message generator in response to data received from at least one of said authorization server and said subscription management system, and to transmit said entitlement messages to the receiver/decoder via the communications server.

19. A broadcast and reception system, comprising, at the broadcast end:

10 a broadcast system including means for broadcasting a callback request;

and at the reception end:

a receiver including means for calling back the broadcast system in response to the callback request;

15 wherein the broadcast system is arranged to validate said receiver via said callback request.

20. A broadcast and reception system according to Claim 19, wherein the broadcast system comprises means for generating a check message and passing this to the receiver, the receiver includes means for encrypting the check message and passing this to the broadcast system, and the broadcast system further includes means  
20 for decrypting the check message received from the receiver and comparing this with the original check message.

21. A system according to Claim 19 or 20, wherein the broadcast means is arranged to broadcast a callback request which includes a command that the callback be made at a given time, and the means for calling back the broadcast system is  
25 arranged to respond to said command.

22. A broadcast and reception system, comprising, at the broadcast end:

a broadcast system including means for broadcasting a callback request;  
and at the reception end:

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a receiver including means for calling back the broadcast system in response to the callback request;

wherein the callback request includes a command that the callback be made at a given time, and the means for calling back the broadcast system is arranged to respond to said command.

23. A system according to any of Claims 19 to 22, wherein the means for calling back the broadcast system includes a modem connectable to a telephone system.

24. A system according to any of Claims 19 to 23, wherein the means for calling back the broadcast system is arranged to transfer to the broadcast system information concerning the receiver.

25. A system according to Claim 24, wherein the broadcast system includes means for storing the information.

26. A system according to any of Claims 19 to 25, wherein the broadcasting means is arranged to broadcast as the callback request at least one entitlement message.

27. A system according to any of Claims 19 to 26, wherein the callback request includes a command that the callback be attempted a given number of times and specifying the time between callback attempts.

28. A system according to any of Claims 19 to 27, wherein the callback request includes a command specifying at least one telephone number to be dialled by the receiving means upon responding to the callback request.

29. A conditional access system or a broadcast and reception system substantially as herein described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings, and especially Figures 12, 13 or 14 thereof.